BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS IN IRELAND.

It is proposed to connect Queen's Quay and Queen's Island, at Belfast, by means of a bridge. The new harbour office (in course of erection from the designs of Mr. George Smyth, harbour engineer), is to be an Italian building, and the site is at the western extremity of the new basin Clarendon dock. The total dimensions are 102 feet in length by 51 feet in width, and 48 feet in height, and it is to have a lofty bell and clock tower, to rise 96 feet above quay level. The superstructure is supported on 500 piles each 40 feet long. About 10 feet has been built. Messrs. D. and J. Fulton are the contractors, and the expenditure is estimated at 8,000*l*. Mr. M'Credie supplies the cut-stone, which is from the neighbourhood of Glasgow.

A new town-hall is contemplated at Belfast.

The Royal Cork Institution is to have additional buildings, for which plans have been prepared.

The drainage works in the counties of Longford and Leitrim are being proceeded with. New bridges are to be built at Kilnacarrow, Rhine, and Agarr, &c. Large numbers are employed.

The centre or framing of three of the arches in the Boyne viaduct have been fixed by means of Wellington cranes. The roads near the viaduct have concealed underneath their surface rods which work large iron pumps, and many machines in the interior of the structure. Three steam hoists, which alternately raise in about one minute loaded waggons 60 or 70 feet, and then precipitate their chains to the bottom of the quarry for a renewed load, are worked by one man, with the usual mechanical contrivances of drums, levers, cog-wheels, &c. The direction of the Beaulieu-road has been altered. In places the quarries are 70 feet deep, and are yielding by means of cranes huge stones, the pieces having ashler courses composed of blocks 3 or 4 feet in thickness, and weighing from ten to fifteen tons each. We were informed that the iron lattice work is in course of preparation and will be forwarded shortly. Unusual difficulties presented themselves in sinking the foundations of the piers which are now nearly complete, except *one*, which (after several ineffectual searches for a solid stratum is to be built entirely on piles. The necessary levellings, &c. for the site of the proposed station at Drogheda, which is no longer to be a wooden construction, are being made. Tenders for the erection of these are being received by the architect, Mr. Papworth.

The new workhouse at Uplingford is finished, and has passed the final inspection of the architect to the Poor-law Commissioners. Mr. Richard Burnham, builder. Mr. Carter, clerk of works.

RAILWAY MATTERS.

A NEW system for the construction of railways was adopted, by tender, for the Middlesborough and Guisborough Railway. The tenders were opened at the offices of Mr. Pease, M.P. Darlington, when Mr. John Harris's, being the lowest, was accepted for 19,000*l*.: the tenders ranged to 37,000*l*. The line is eleven miles, and is to be completed in December, 1853. The tender includes stations and all conveniences, excepting the iron for rails, chairs, &c.

The contract for the construction of the Branch Midland Narrow Gauge line from Gloucester to Stonehouse, has been given to Mr. A. Ritson, of Plymouth. The amount of his tender was, we believe, between 23,000*l*. and 24,000*l*.

On Wednesday week the traffic on the main line of the Great Northern Railway was suddenly interrupted by an extensive slip of earth in the Spittal-gate cuttings, about a mile south of Grantham. Late heavy rains are blamed. The slip extended about 100 yards, and it is not the first that has occurred here.

An important decision, upon a point never before settled in England, though more than once, decided in Scotland, was lately given in the County Court of Yorkshire. The plaintiff was Mr. Raikes, banker, and the defendants were the York and North Midland Railway Company, one of whose trains, being a "heavy" one—that is, unusually full of passengers—had arrived at Milford Junction half an hour too late for the Great Northern quick train for London. The jury gave 5*l*. damages.

The want of a means of communication between passengers and guards, and between guards and drivers, as well as passengers, was lately shown in a circumstance which is reported to have occurred to the Duchess of Kent on her way from Scotland, and Darlington and York, between which towns the Duchess and her suite are said to have been aware from the outset that the waterproof covering placed over some luggage on the top of one of the first-class carriages in the train had been fired by sparks from the engine; but they were without the means of either informing the guard or stopping the train, and were kept in a state of most unpleasant suspense for some time in consequence, until the firing had proceeded far enough to attract the attention of the guard; and, even then, it is hard to say, without a special knowledge of the circumstance, how the mockery of a "guard" could have communicated with the driver so as to stop the train in time to save the carriage and those in it. We think it quite as likely that the "guard" felt it to be rather an extra hazardous exploit to scramble over the roofs of the carriages, as on previous and usual occasions, in order to reach the engine and its driver, which on this occasion, would have been rather too like "passing through the fire to Moloch;" and that he sat "like patience on a monument," but scarcely "smiling" at the "grief" that might ensue, till, in the fulness of time, the train stopped at one of its watering places, when the fire was fortunately extinguished in time to save the lives of the passengers.

RIVAL GAS COMPANIES.

CAUTION TO BUILDERS AND TENANTS.

IN the Whitechapel County Court, recently, an action was brought of some importance to consumers of gas, touching the introduction of rival gas companies' mains into premises where gas pipes may be or which may have been previously laid on.

Mr. Cox, solicitor to the Imperial Gaslight and Coke Company, said the company sought to recover 8*l*. 18*s*. 6*d*. of the defendant Hill, who he believed was not the ostensible defendant in the matter, but was rather the agent of another gas company. Mr. Hill had burnt their gas for some time, and upon their inspector calling at defendant's premises some time since to gauge, he found the Imperial gas cut off, and another company's laid on. Although his clients' claim was 12*l*. 12*s*. 9*d*. he, Mr. Cox, in the exercise of his discretion, would abandon one quarter. He must call the attention of the Court to,—and as he was informed there were several tradesmen in court connected with various branches of the building trade, he would take the opportunity of impressing upon their minds—a peculiar feature of the present case. The Imperial Gas Company's Act of Incorporation required parties burning their gas to give notice of their intention of discontinuing it; and it also required of their company to give a like notice to parties whom they did not desire to further supply with gas. It had been already held by three Courts, that the Imperial were legally entitled to this notice, and could recover for gas, whether burnt or not, during the whole time such notice was withheld. He therefore urged that he was now entitled to a verdict. He then proved the Act of Incorporation, and pointed out the clause in the Act demanding this notice, and then called an officer of the Imperial, who proved defendant's signing a printed form of rules laid down for the guidance of parties burning the Imperial gas.

Mr. Walker, the gas inspector, said that he found their pipes disconnected, and another company's laid on. He then told Hill he should have given notice. Hill said, he thought, if he had done so, they would have enforced payment of his arrears by cutting off his gas, so he had the gas of the railway company.

Mr. Davis, an attorney, who appeared for the defendant, urged the arbitrariness of the condition of notice, and said, if such a contract, or whatever else, had been entered into by his client to give this notice of discontinuance, by signing the printed form, Mr. Hill must have done it unconsciously. It daily happened that builders had to remove piping laid down by gas companies in houses untenanted, and he supposed the next experimental action under this Act of Incorporation would be against the builders, for removing the pipes without notice. Mr. Cox might smile, but he, Mr. Davis, knew that members of the building trade felt much interested in the Imperial crusade. He called the defendant, Mr. Hill, who stated he had had dealings with the "Imperial" since 1848, and paid them about 7*l*. per year for gas until the last year, when they charged him about 13*l*. He did not sign any contract, but gave notice that he was not going to burn their gas any longer, when he paid his last account at the Imperial office.

By Mr. Cox.—Has paid for gas before it was burnt the same as others. Does not believe he wrote John Hill to the contract before him. It must be some one else's writing. Never said what the inspector has stated. Left the Imperial for charging 6*s*. per thousand, when he could get it from the Eastern Counties for 4*s*. The defendant here so contradicted himself, that the judge at once gave a verdict for the plaintiffs, thus establishing the right of the gas company to notice of discontinuation.

CONTRACTORS AND SUB-CONTRACTORS.

[Where a sub-contractor fails to complete his contract, it is held that the party contracting with him may employ another builder, and charge the sub-contractor for the expense of finishing the contract.]

IN the Lambeth County Court, recently, an action was brought by Mr. Chadwick, a builder, at Camberwell, against Mr. Bodley, a sub-contractor of joinery, also of Camberwell. The sum sought to be recovered was 35*l*. and the defendant pleaded a set-off of 33*l*.

Mr. Chadwick stated that he contracted with Mr. Bodley to do the joinery work of two houses in Camberwell-grove, and for which work it was agreed the defendant should receive 80*l*. Mr. Bodley had been paid that, and left the work before it was completed. In consequence of this he (Mr. Chadwick) served the defendant with a notice requiring him to finish the contract, or in failing to do which, he (plaintiff) intended calling in another builder to complete the job, and charge the defendant with the costs so incurred. Mr. Bodley refused to return to the work, and consequently he, plaintiff, carried out the purport of his notice, and the joiner's bill for finishing defendant's contract came to 35*l*. which he now sued the defendant for. Mr. Chadwick here handed in the specification.

Mr. Binns.—I must object to that document being put in evidence, unless it be stamped.

Mr. Chadwick.—I expected something of this nature, and have come prepared. I have, at an expense of 10*l*. had it stamped, and for the future will have all such documents stamped at the right time, and not place my interests in such expensive jeopardy.

Cross-examined by Mr Binns.—I ordered some extras to be done by the defendant, but I should say not more than to the extent of 30*s*. Any other alteration, by direction of my superintendent of works, would be under my implied sanction. The defendant drew more money than he was entitled to. He certainly ran away from his work. He is not charged by us more than we actually contracted with the builder, to complete his job. It was not arranged between us the defendant was to have his wages weekly.

Mr. Jackson, superintendent of works to plaintiff, said what work the defendant did was unsatisfactorily done, and for which he was paid by weekly instalments. They had to finish it, and the sum charged for finishing it is fair. For what extras defendant did he had been paid, and he had received in all 85*l*. instead of the contract price, 80*l*. Witness produced two bills of defendant's for extras, amounting to 3*l*. 10*s*. and said they were delivered at the time the work was done, and were the only claims received.

Mr. Binns said he was in rather an unfavourable position. His client, who had a good defence to the action, and was perfectly justified in refusing to complete the contract, had neglected to give the requisite notice of set-off. Would his Honour adjourn the case?

Mr. Chadwick refused to be a party to the adjournment, and Mr. Bodley was then called upon to answer to the plaint. He stated, that although not mentioned in the specification, it was understood when he took the contract he was to be paid by weekly instalments, according to the number of men he had at work. For two pay nights he had had two pounds tendered him, whilst he had had three men at work, and should have received 4*l*. 10*s*. to pay them with. He had to pay these men out of his own pocket. Under this state of things he gave plaintiff notice of his intention to discontinue further works. He did extras to the amount of 30*l*. and completed his contract as far

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